

Message Text

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70

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 NIC-01 SAJ-01 /055 W

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R 180204Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO /SECSTATE WASHDC 8411

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

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HW UDORN 237DTD NOV 15 1974 RPTD FOR YOUR INFO:

E.O. 16652: N/AA

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJ: INCREASED SINO-THAI POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

1. INITIAL INDICATIONS ARE THAT SINO-THAI MERCHANTS ARE GOING TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE AND VISIBLE ROLE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS THAN EVER BEFORE. ONE REASON FOR THEIR INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROCESS EVIDENTLY IS THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION HAS CHANGED THE DEFINITION OF THAI CITIZENSHIP. IN ADDITION, WE UNDERSTAND A NEW NATIONALITY LAW IS SHORTLY EXPECTED TO BE PROMULGATED WHICH WILL BROADLY REDEFINE NATIONALITY.

2. THE APPARENT RESPONSE OF THE CHINESE HAS BEEN TO TOSS THEIR HATS INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA. IN BOTH KORAT AND SURIN, 12-MAN SLATES OF SINO-THAI BUSINESSMEN (CHAO CHOU) ARE ENTERING THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, AND IN SURIN EVEN GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, A SINO-THAI BUSINESSMAN IN UBON NAMED CHAISIRI RUANGKANCHANASET, HAS FORMED A REGIONAL PARTY, THE PRACHATHAM (CHINESE NAME TUNG HOA), TO CONTEST THE SEATS IN

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THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. CHAISIRI, WHO IS RUMORED TO BE THE

RICHEST MAN IN THE NORTHEAST, WILL RUN HIMSELF ALONG WITH TWO BROTHERS AND A BROTHER-IN-LAW IN UBON WHILE A SISTER RUNS IN SURIN. ANOTHER SINO-THAI BUSINESSMAN SEEKING OFFICE IS SERI PHONGPHINYO, A 44 YEAR OLD ENTRPRENEUR WHO OWNS LUMBER INTERESTS AS WELL AS THE FORD AND JOHN DEERE AGENCIES IN KHON KAEN.

COMMENT: THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE LAW PRESENT THE SINO-THAI WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE OPENLY IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, SOME SEEM TO BE TAKING IT UP WITH GUSTO.BIGELOW UNQTE KINTNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, CITIZENSHIP LAW, POLITICAL SITUATION, ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BANGKO18097
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740332-0353
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741136/aaaabduz.tel
Line Count: 72
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Aug-2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <14 MAR 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INCREASED SINO-THAI POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
TAGS: PINT, TH, CH
To: SONGKHLA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005